

establishing a national standard for meal charges and alternate meals and best practices guidance. While the FNS study showed that unpaid debt is not a systemic issue, for some schools and school districts unpaid debt has become a greater problem given other budgetary restraints. To assist these schools and school districts, FNS is seeking comments, concerns and suggestions on the extent of the problems and what has been done across the nation to address this issue of maintaining access to meals and also a school food service in strong financial standing.

FNS' objective is to receive input from a broad spectrum of parties that may be affected by policies on a number of topics relating to meal charges. These include students and their parents, school district officials, school food service staff, State agency officials, and the general public. FNS has an interest in working with States and school districts to ensure that schools are providing access to healthy meals to all children, but are also able to pay for the costs that they incur. FNS is particularly interested in learning if there is a relationship between a student who is extended "credit" and that child's eligibility for free and reduced priced meals.

FNS intends to use the information it receives to prepare a report on the feasibility of establishing national standards for meal charges and the provision of alternate meals and to provide recommendations for implementing those standards, as required by the HHFKA. Information submitted to FNS will also help to develop "Best Practices" guidance for meal charge policies and assist FNS in developing recommendations for Congressional review.

To assist in developing comments, FNS is seeking input regarding the following questions. FNS welcomes comments to all questions below.

1. Does your school district have a written policy on meal charges and/or when alternate meals may be provided? If so, please attach your policy or a link to a Web site containing the policy to your comment.

2. Which officials are responsible for developing the policies (e.g., school district business officials, the school food service director, school principals, etc.)?

3. Are there any grade level differences; for example, are only children below high school allowed to charge meals?

4. May children who do not have their payment or who have outstanding charges/unpaid balance select any reimbursable meal or are children

offered alternate meals in lieu of the selection of reimbursable meals? If alternate meals are offered, what types of foods are offered in alternate meals?

5. Are reimbursable alternate meals available? If so, at what eligibility rate is your school district claiming these meals?

6. Does your school's unpaid meal charge policy include a modified approach for handling students based on the duration of unpaid meal status, and if so, how?

7. Are there any consequences outside the meal service for students who do not have their meal payment for the day (e.g., the student may not participate in extracurricular activities or report cards are not released, etc)?

8. How does the school ensure the children's eligibility status does not become apparent to other children or school staff as result of the school's implementation of the credit procedures?

9. Does a child's unpaid meal status become apparent to other children or school staff? If so, how? Are there measures you take to minimize the chances these children are identified and what do you find to be the most (or least) effective strategies?

10. Is any financial support to the school food service from the school district provided to offset costs related to the meal charges policy?

11. How are parents informed of the policies about charging meals, limits on charges, low account balances, outstanding balances, and methods of payment?

12. Have outstanding debts increased or decreased in your school district over the last 3 school years?

13. What steps does your school district provide to assist families with meal charges to apply for free or reduced price meals?

14. Are children with outstanding debts mostly those:

- a. Eligible for reduced price meals;
- b. Potentially eligible for free or reduced price but who have not applied or been certified; or
- c. Who applied but were not eligible?

15. How do outstanding meal payments affect the ability of food service to meet the meal pattern requirements?

16. Does your school district have a la carte sales? If so, are children allowed to charge these items and how is repayment of any charges handled?

17. If your school district does not have a meal charge policy, how does that affect children who do not have their meal payment for the day?

When preparing information in response to this request, please keep in

mind that FNS is seeking comments within the current statutory structure of the school meals programs. For example, while serving all meals at no cost to all students would eliminate the need for credit policies; this approach would require statutory change as currently, schools may only offer all students free meals if they are operating under a Special Provision, including the Community Eligibility Provision. This approach is beyond the scope of this information request. FNS appreciates your thoughtful and responsive comments.

Dated: October 8, 2014.

**Jeffrey J. Tribiano,**

*Acting Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Food and Nutrition Service

#### **Request for Information: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Revision of the Program and Budget Summary Statement Part B—Program Activity Statement**

**AGENCY:** Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** Each year, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) State agencies are required to submit the Program and Budget Summary Statement Part B, Program Activity Statement (FNS-366B) to the Food Nutrition Service (FNS) per 7 CFR 272.2(c)(ii). Information collected on this form includes fraud activity for the reporting fiscal year such as a total number of fraud referrals, investigations, prosecutions, disqualification consent agreements (DCA), administrative disqualification hearings (ADH) and ADH waivers. This form further contains data on program dollars associated with pre-certification and post-certification fraud investigations, as well as program dollars that may be recovered resulting from an ADH or prosecution. This information is reported not later than 45 days after the end of the State agency's fiscal year, which is typically August 15th for most States. FNS is contemplating proposed changes to this form in order to improve the reliability and accuracy of State integrity reporting by revising data field definitions, such as what constitutes an investigation, for clarity and consistency. FNS is also considering an increase in the frequency

of reporting and would be interested in better understanding what impact increasing the reporting frequency may have on stakeholders. Furthermore, FNS is considering the addition of new data elements in order to better understand the impact and value returned to the taxpayer as a result of fraud prevention activities. Through this notice, FNS announces a request for information regarding the impacts for consideration in revising the Program Activity Statement (FNS-366B). FNS will consider all comments in the development of the new reporting form.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before January 14, 2015.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments may be sent to Jane Duffield, Chief, State Administration Branch, Program Accountability and Administration Division, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 818, Alexandria, VA 22302. Comments may also be emailed to [SNAPSAB@fns.usda.gov](mailto:SNAPSAB@fns.usda.gov). Comments will also be accepted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and follow the online instructions for submitting comments electronically.

All written comments will be open for public inspection at the FNS office located at 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302, Room 800, during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday). All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval. All comments will be a matter of public record.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Requests for additional information or copies of this request for information should be directed to Kelly Stewart at (703) 305-2425.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** State agencies report annually to FNS using the Program and Budget Summary Statement Part B—Program Activity Statement (FNS-366B) per 7 CFR 272.2(c)(ii) of the Federal regulations. FNS is considering changes to the form that could include changing the reporting frequency, adding new data elements, and changing or removing current data elements. FNS is also soliciting stakeholder suggestions for establishing with State data a national cost avoidance calculation methodology, as well as obtaining input on how best to clearly define all data elements and instructions to gain consistency among States.

FNS National and Regional Office staff developed a national standardized

Recipient Integrity Management Evaluation (ME) protocol which provides a comprehensive assessment of how effectively States are managing recipient fraud prevention activities and provides an opportunity for communication between FNS and State agencies. Management evaluations have allowed FNS to discuss the FNS-366B with State and local officials, gathering information about its usefulness and ease of completing the form. Based on the results of management evaluations completed to date, it is apparent that State reporting lacks consistency and the FNS-366B does not have clearly defined data elements or instructions. Due to the lack of clarity in these instructions, responses are left open to interpretation, and can and do vary among States, leading to unreliable reported data.

Further, the FNS-366B lacks certain data elements that would increase its effectiveness and provide more accurate information on the types, as well as impact, of fraud prevention activities implemented by State Agencies. FNS is considering the addition of new data elements, such as those focusing on trafficking investigations and disqualifications, in order to gather better information that allows FNS to focus fraud prevention and detection strategies where they are most needed.

FNS is also considering changes to the frequency States report the information collected on the FNS-366B. An increase in reporting frequency would allow for greater and more timely access to program data. It would help States, FNS, and other stakeholders identify trends, inconsistencies and inefficiencies earlier in each fiscal year. With more current data, States and other interested parties would be able to identify gaps and areas in need of greater attention, and allow States to respond more quickly to those gaps.

FNS is proposing to add new reporting elements to better measure the effectiveness and impact of fraud prevention activities. FNS would like to define a standard national methodology for States to determine cost avoidance from their fraud prevention activities in order to quantify a return on investment for investigations or activities that result in a finding of fraud. A cost avoidance calculation methodology would attempt to quantify program dollars that a fraud determination outcome, such as a finding of an intentional program violation (IPV), prevented from being improperly used. For example, if an investigation finds that a recipient is guilty of trafficking, by establishing an IPV, how many program dollars might have been abused if the case was not

investigated or prosecuted? Related to this, FNS would like to identify a methodology to measure how quickly disqualification takes place once recipient trafficking is identified. This methodology should allow FNS to assess how quickly States investigate and remove individuals that are guilty of trafficking, while ensuring FNS rules and regulations are upheld and clients receive due process.

Finally, FNS is always mindful of the importance of balancing integrity and access. The Agency does not tolerate any level of fraud and takes an aggressive stance to work with its partners to hold guilty individuals accountable for their actions.

However, those actions cannot be taken at the expense of discouraging eligible individuals from participating in the program or violating any individual's right to due process. FNS is interested in stakeholder input regarding the types of information that might be collected to help ensure that fraud prevention strategies are not resulting in any unintended consequences that adversely impact program access. Examples include failing to advise an individual of their rights, unlawfully withholding an eligible individual's access to benefits, or using coercion to obtain a signed disqualification consent agreement.

With these general interests in mind, FNS is seeking information from stakeholders on the following particular questions:

1. What new data elements should FNS consider adding to the FNS-366B that are not currently reported?
2. Do States currently utilize or possess performance measurement methods or tools to evaluate the new data elements being suggested? If not, what evaluation tools should be developed in order to collect and/or analyze new data elements?
3. What data elements should FNS remove or revise on the FNS-366B?
4. What, if any, barriers would States have to reporting trafficking fraud as a separate category from other types of fraud?
5. How are investigations currently defined? Should investigations be separated into pre-certification investigations and post-certification investigations for reporting purposes? Why or why not? What other distinctions should be considered?
6. What barriers, if any, keep States from accurately completing the form?
  - a. Are these concerns regarding the form and/or instructions?
  - b. Are there hurdles within State agencies that make reporting of data required on this form difficult?

7. Do States or stakeholders anticipate an increase in administrative expenditures or other impact if SNAP restructures the FNS-366B? If yes, please explain.

8. How much time would be required for State agencies to adjust their systems and reporting mechanisms in order to provide different or additional information on a revised FNS-366B?

9. How would increasing the frequency of reporting impact stakeholders? If additional costs would be part of this impact, please explain.

10. How is this data currently used by the State and what benefit(s) does it provide?

11. What data and methodology for calculating cost avoidance as a result of fraud prevention activities should FNS consider?

12. What data and methodology should be considered to measure how quickly recipient trafficking suspects are investigated and disqualified in accordance with FNS rules and regulations?

13. What data should FNS consider collecting to ensure that fraud prevention activities do not adversely impact program access?

Dated: October 8, 2014.

**Jeffrey J. Tribiano,**

*Acting Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest; Idaho; Johnson Bar Fire Salvage

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The Forest Service gives notice of its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Johnson Bar Fire Salvage Project. The Proposed action would utilize ground based (tractor and skyline) and helicopter logging systems to harvest trees killed by the Johnson Bar Fire. Harvested areas would be replanted with early seral species such as ponderosa pine, western white pine and western larch. Approximately 3 miles of roads would be decommissioned to reduce sediment related impacts to the watershed. The EIS will analyze the effects of the proposed action and alternatives. The Nez Perce-Clearwater Forests invites comments and suggestions on the issues to be

addressed. The agency gives notice of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and decision making process on the proposal so interested and affected members of the public may participate and contribute to the final decision.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by November 17, 2014. The draft environmental impact statement is expected in March 2015 and the final environmental impact statement is expected July 2015.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to Mike Ward or Tam White, Interdisciplinary Team Leaders; 502 Lowry Street, Kooskia, Idaho 83539. Comments may also be sent via email to [comments-northern-nezperce-moose-creek@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-nezperce-moose-creek@fs.fed.us)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mike Ward, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, (208) 926-6413 or Tam White, Interdisciplinary Team Leader (208) 926-6416.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The objective of the Johnson Bar Fire Salvage Project would be to recover the economic value of the timber burned in the fire and move the area towards desired species compositions (ponderosa pine, western white pine and western larch) through reforestation as well as improve watershed conditions.

**Purpose:** Provide a sustained yield of resource outputs at a level that will help support the economic structure of local communities and provide for regional and national needs (Nez Perce Forest Plan, II-1)

**Need:** There is a need to utilize dead trees resulting from the fire in a timely manner to provide social and economic benefits before they lose commercial value and merchantability, which would contribute to the supply of timber for local, regional, and national needs.

**Purpose:** Reduce potential sediment inputs into the aquatic ecosystem.

**Need:** Sediment input from gravel and native surface roads can flow into streams, negatively affecting fish habitat and water quality. Improvement of watershed function and stream conditions can be accomplished by reducing road densities and repairing existing roads and culverts to reduce sediment and improve drainage.

The Proposed Action would: Salvage harvest approximately 4,000 acres of dead trees within the approximate 13,000 acre fire area. Harvesting operations would primarily utilize skyline and helicopter logging systems with a small component of ground

based tractor skidding where appropriate. Openings are likely to exceed 40 acres.

Approximately 23 segments of temporary roads would be built to provide line machine access from existing system roads. These spurs generally average approximately 0.16 miles each and would be removed following harvest.

Fire killed or "dead" trees for the purposes of this project are determined using guidelines that determine mortality by the amount of scorch and fire severity surrounding the roots and lower trunk. Field validation of these guidelines indicates they are accurate for the forest types and fire severity in the project area. All live trees will be generally retained however incidental removal may occur to facilitate harvest operations.

Reforestation would plant long lived early seral tree species such as ponderosa pine, western white pine and western larch. This strategy would allow us to continue towards the goal of restoring more resilient tree species across the landscape. Seventeen to thirty-three tons per acre of standing and down large woody debris would be left across the treatment area to provide soil microclimate and habitat, long term nutrients, soil stability, and snag habitat. For safety reasons, retention would generally occur in clumps rather than individual snags distributed across the units. Retention would generally favor the largest snags. Approximately 3 miles of unneeded roads may be decommissioned by placing them in a hydrologically stable condition. This may involve a range of road decommissioning methods from culvert removal to full recontouring.

As they are developed, additional information and maps will be posted to "NEPA Projects" page on the Forests Web site: [http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/project\\_list.php?forest=110117](http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/project_list.php?forest=110117).

#### Responsible Official and Lead Agency

The USDA Forest Service is the lead agency for this proposal. The Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Supervisor is the responsible official.

The Decision To Be Made is whether to adopt the proposed action, in whole or in part, or another alternative; and what mitigation measures and management requirements will be implemented.

The Scoping Process for the EIS is being initiated with this notice. The scoping process will identify issues to be analyzed in detail and will lead to the development of alternatives to the proposal. The Forest Service is seeking